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THE STAR OF THE EAST

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an ecumenical journal dealing
specially with the oriental and
eastern orthodox churches.

JOHN THOMAS, KARINGATTIL
P.O. AKM. P.O.

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An Ecumenical Journal dealing specially with
the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

SOPHIA CENTRE, ORTHODOX SEMINARY, P. B. 98,
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JOHN THOMAS, KARINGATTIL
PANDALM. P.O.

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ചെയ്യാൻ

EDITORIAL

A Bird's Eye View and Beyond

For people living in the pre-aviation period, a 'bird's eye view' represented the conspectus of a given geographical area. Metaphorically it was a vision of the whole. But it was a general view lacking in the precision and accuracy of details. Literally a bird's eye view was much limited since birds do not generally fly beyond a certain altitude. Our sophisticated air-crafts enlarged the bird's view. This vision has been maximized by the space crafts. Now human beings are able to watch their own little planet earth in all its totality. The expression bird's eye-view may be obsolete. A cosmonaut's eye view may be relatively more accurate! Has a corresponding enlargement of vision happened in human attitude and understanding, beyond this literal, physical vision of the whole?

A person trained in modern scientific methodology used to be very uncomfortable with bird's eye-views. Scientific objectivity, increasing specialization, analytical spirit and pre-occupation with the accuracy of details are thought to be at the opposite pole of a so-called general, vague and hazy vision. It is true that this polar opposition has helped to satisfy to some extent the quest for certainty in scientific circles. Originally applied in physical sciences this has also been extended to human sciences and related fields as a constitutive principle of scientific method. The achievements in the exact sciences owe a great deal to this fundamental methodological opposition.

But many serious scientists themselves have long begun to suspect that the so far successful scientific concern with the objective, the analytical and the particular has resulted in a scientific reductionism detrimental to a sane view of reality. Thus a reverse trend has been set. More and more visionary scientists now begin to be interested in shaping a holistic scientific world view. This view would dare to draw conclusions which are not strictly "scientific" from Quantum theory, Relativity theory and the avant-grade researches in particle physics, molecular biology or brain research. They freely enter the sanctuaries of Zen Buddhism, Taoism or Yoga in search of hidden links with modern scientific picture

of reality. Eliminating an exaggerated concern with the individual trees, they seem to look romantically for the woods themselves. The bird's eye view or its modern counter part in its best sense seems to be in vogue.

The old philosophical preoccupation with the relationship between the part and the whole, between the particular and the universal or between the multiple and the One is still with us in altered forms. Attempts to define this relationship has never been fully successful. For the visionary scientists understanding reality in terms of integral relationship is fundamental. For some of the physicists it is highly significant that the sub-atomic particles can never be understood as individual entities, but only as interconnections between processes of observation and measurement. Werner Heisenberg, one of the proponents of Quantum theory had remarked: "The world thus appears as a complicated tissue of events in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine, and thereby determine the texture of the whole."

A new vision of the whole, an exhilarating sense of the One is gradually emerging from many different quarters. The paradox is that parochial and partial vision, most often highly destructive than creative, is simultaneously shooting forth a thousand heads one against the other. Everybody is agreed that we need the holistic vision of a bird's eye view. But some birds seldom fly. Some others fly a little higher. Very few soar sufficiently high. But all have their own eye views! Humanity was hoping that a cosmonaut's eye view might be more holistic since coming from a higher plane. But is it not a little bit depressing to find that the American, Russian or Indian eye view is simply transplanted in the outer space as well? Herein lies one of the most crucial moral challenges before mankind.

(K. M. G)

Vattasseril Mar Dionysius stood for the freedom of the Church

(Presidential Address by H. H. Baseliuse Marthoma Mathews I Catholicos of the East inviting Dr. M. Hidayatullah, Vice President of India to inaugurate the Public Meeting in connection with the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Passing away of Malankara Sabhabhasuran Vattasseril Geevarghese Mar Dionysius Metropolitan, on 26-2-1984)

Your Excellency Dr. Hidayatullah, Vice President of India, Hon'ble Chief Minister Sri. K. Karunakaran, Honourable Minister of State for External affairs Sri. A. A. Rahim, Your Graces, honourable ministers and respected speakers and our beloved people.

For us, this 50th anniversary of the passing away of our distinguished predecessor Geevarghese Mar Dionysius, is an occasion of joy and thanksgiving. We rejoice, because we today enjoy the fruits of his labour.

Mar Gheevarghese Dionysius was the Malankara Metropolitan of this ancient Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, which was founded by St. Thomas in 52 A. D. As the head of this community for a quarter of a century beginning from 1909, he stood for the freedom of the church, most vital to the welfare of the church in India. He had to face trials and persecution in defending that principle. As a true christian and a christian leader, he faced those trials and persecution with utmost dedication and patience.

He did not himself become Catholicos of the East, though he was eminently worthy of being the first Indian occupant of that Catholicate. But he was God's instrument, more than 70 years ago, for restoring the Catholicate of the East, which had fallen vacant and become almost defunct in Persia since 1895. In 1912, Geevarghese Mar Dionysius took the lead in getting the Catholicate of the East re-established, and transferred to India.

On September 12, 1912, at the ancient Church of Niranom, Mar Ivanios, the seniormost Bishop of our Church, was installed as the first Indian Catholicos of the East. We are the fifth Indian occupant of that Apostolic Throne of St. Thomas which has become the symbol of our independence and autonomy. What we celebrate today is the 50th anniversary of the passing away of the great Metropolitan of Malankara, who made the re-establishment of that Apostolic throne possible, by the grace of God. Behind the scenes, we know that the great and saintly Mar Dionysius continues to intercede for us and for our Church. Today we pay tribute to the

memory of a great Indian national, who fought to defend the Indian Church from foreign incursions, and was farsighted enough to set up a firm bulwark for the freedom and autonomy of the Indian Church, in the form of the Catholicate of the East.

Mar Dionysius was as much a man of learning as he was a paragon of sanctity and integrity. The writings he left behind are clear statements of the faith of the Church. He combined in an unusual manner, sanctity, learning and administrative ability. For us 15 lakhs of Orthodox Christians, his memory is still a most inspiring one, as you notice from the enthusiasm of our people today.

You have done us a singular honour, Your Excellency, in being present with us to inaugurate this public meeting. In a secular state like ours, it is a great privilege that both our President and our Vice-President hail from minority communities. And it is a great testimony to our secular democracy that you a distinguished jurist and scholar, who is also a devout Muslim, can inaugurate this public meeting in honour of a great christian leader, and that national and state leaders from all the major religious communities of Kerala can be joining with us in our festivities. We are most grateful for the presence of our Chief Minister Sri. K. Karunakaran a very devout and pious Hindu, as well as Sri. A. A. Rahim, the Minister of State for External affairs, who only recently made his pilgrimage to Mecca. There are several others who will be speaking today who hail from different Hindu and Christian communities.

We in Kerala are still very proud of our communal harmony and the mutual respect of our religious communities for each other. As you probably know, this harmony was put to the test last year by some unfortunate developments in connection with building a Church in Nilackal, at a site associated with St. Thomas the Apostle of Jesus Christ and the founder of our Church in India. For a while there was the fear in all of us, that communal frenzy and violent conflict would spread to our state. It is a great tribute to the nobility and restraint of leaders of both Hindus and Christians in Kerala that the matter has now been amicably settled. Our Hindu brethren and sisters as well as their leaders are to be specially commended for their exemplary wisdom in avoiding a conflict and in finding a just settlement of the problem. Now we wish that a similar attitude would prevail in other parts of India where communal conflicts take a violent turn and inflict a heavy toll on our people!

We Orthodox Christians who have a history in India which is as old as Christianity itself, have no hesitation in affirming our commitment to a secular state in India which treats every Indian alike, be he Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Jew or Zoroastrian. We are proud of India's plural heritage, and we

do not want any one religion to have preferred treatment, unless it is to remedy grievous injustice.

Your presence in our midst, Dr. Hidayatullah, is a powerful testimony to this commitment to communal harmony, and to the equality of all religions in a secular state. We are immensely grateful to you for having taken the pains to be present with us on this occasion. We know that tomorrow you have to be back in our national capital to preside over our Rajya Sabha. We know that you have shown a special favour to a minority community in consenting to be present today in our midst despite your many commitments.

Our brother Metropolitan Dr. Thomas Mar Makarios has already welcomed Your Excellency on behalf of all of us. May I now have the privilege, Dr. Hidayatullah, Vice-President of India, to request you to grace this occasion with your learned inaugural address.

"From Ashes Unto Glory"

(Inaugural address of H. E. Dr. M. Hidayatulla, Vice President of India at the Public meeting in connection with the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Passing away of Malankara Sabhabhasuran Vattasseril Dionysius Metropolitan, on 26-2-1984.)

Your Holiness the Catholicos, Ministers, Bishops and distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are not celebrating the death anniversary—rather so much as death comes to all of us—we are celebrating the deeds of a man who created history and live in our memory.

The Orthodox Church founded by Apostle St. Thomas in 52 A. D. is the oldest church in the East. The late Vattasseril Mar Dionysius has inherited its tradition and faith.

The Orthodox church which is a symbol of Liberty is a strong link of liberation in the Indian Nationality. The Philosophy of the late Vattasseril Mar Dionysius who fought for establishing the freedom of Malankara Orthodox church from the foreign rule is unique.

The great leader who loved freedom had to face many an ordeal from time to time. He was hounded by many tribulations. He was excommunicated. He was a soldier of faith and a 'Treasury of knowledge'. He was ready to sacrifice everything for freedom.

Vattasseril Metropolitan, a man of great learning and indomitable courage has built the Orthodox church almost from the ashes once again into such a glorious state.

The Orthodox Church has upheld the Philosophy of liberation which forms the basis of christianity. The vision of this church gave strength for other christian communities in India for raising their trumpet of liberation.

Geevarghese Mar Dionysius who made the clarion call for liberty and peace was instrumental in the hands of God to restore the church into its original state of freedom. He was willing to suffer for the right cause. The crucifixion of Christ also enlighten the philosophy of liberation. This has become the basis of our national liberation process.

We have to face a number of problems in our leap towards progress. In India we are passing through a different time because there have been divisions on the basis of religion which are weakening our prosperity. The minor issues which arise in this

process should not become the cause of bigger issues. It will hinder our progress. We should accept this as our guideline for attaining peace and progress.

No religion teaches to offend the teaching of another religion. Hate and religion won't go together. There is a proverb in 'Koran' —"Your religion is yours. My religion is mine". But everybody believes in God. The goodness of mankind is more important.

The goodness of mankind is the corner stone of christian faith. The late Vattasseril Mar Dionysius tried to find out the goodness. He has imbibed our cultural heritage of pardoning and forgiving.

We should be able to express our faith through love. This will not be possible without a deep understanding of our faith. We should be able to love everything that God has created.

We must sacrifice everything for establishing truth, justice and freedom. Let the life and teachings of the late Mar Dionysius lead our cause.

Our faith will not be complete without religious tolerance. This is the teaching of each and every religion. Let us be the soldiers of liberation who have accepted religious tolerance as their shield and armour.

(Compiled by Paul Manalil)

Mar Dionysius played a creative role in shaping the history of the Orthodox Church

(Thomas Mar Athanasios Suffragan Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church)

Your Excellency Dr. Hidayatulla, the Vice President of India, Your Holiness the Catholicos, Minister, Brother, Bishops, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we celebrate the 50th death Anniversary of an illustrious leader of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. I have vivid recollections of seeing him, hearing him, and witnessing the huge crowds at his burial service, lamenting the death of a revered leader.

The late Geevarghese Mar Dionysius Metropolitan was endowed with unusual intellectual acumen, clear vision of the church and its future, authentic grasp of the meaning of the church and above all, the willingness to suffer for what he believed to be precious for the cause for which he was called to be the leader. Time does not allow me to dwell at length on the remarkable qualities of this outstanding personality.

Today we are gathered here to pay homage to the memory of one who, more than any one else, shaped the destiny of the Orthodox Syrian Church. I do not wish to compare the theological and administrative positions of the churches in this country. Such a pursuit will not enable us to see the type of leadership the late Mar Dionysius provided. The right question to ask is not a question of comparative ecclesiology but it is a more spiritually challenging question. What was the vision he saw and the price he paid in obedience to the vision? The events of history testify to the fact that the foundations for the growth of the Orthodox Church were laid not only during his time but by him. A dynamic person like the late Mar Dionysius played an unquestionably creative role in shaping the history of the Orthodox Church.

I believe that his vision of the Church comprised of both autonomy of the church and ecclesiastical relationship with other churches of the same tradition. In him we see the opening of a new chapter; a task which was most difficult to perform. But at the altar of the church, he laid down unusual gifts of leadership and laboured with a vision that never became dim amidst the trials the late Metropolitan had to undergo.

During a crisis, the late Metropolitan is said to have remarked that what matters most is the quality of the Church rather than the numerical strength or the quantitative aspect.

Such was the man and such, the memory he has left behind. I know that in his day thousands of people revered him and this meeting, the presence of distinguished leaders and the mass of people gathered here is a proof of the momentum Mar Dionysius Metropolitan has provided.

The inspiration of humanity is the roll-call of its famous men. On behalf of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, on this historic occasion I offer sincere felicitations to the Malankara Syrian Church.

Mar Geevarghese Dionysius, a great soul

(Sri. K. M. Mathew, Chief Editor, Malayala Manorama)

My humble respects to our beloved Upa Rashtrapathi Dr. M. Hidayathulla, our Chief Minister Sri. K. Karunakaran, Sri. A. A. Rahim, H. H. the Catholicos of the East Baselius Marthoma Mathews I, His Grace Mar Athanasios and the large distinguished gathering here.

This is a red letter day in the annals of the X'an Community of India in general and the Orthodox Syrian Community of Malabar in particular.

It is so because we are honouring and remembering a great soul, Mar Geevarghese Dionysius, who has sowed the seeds of independence for a progressive and enlightened community in Kerala.

Mar Dionysius stood firmly and solemnly like the rock of Gibraltar against vicissitudes of opposition that defy description.

The inspiration and leadership given by him drew the eminent intellectuals of Kerala to his laudable way of thinking.

They gave him support absolute and perfect to fight for the administrative independence of the church.

He fought many legal battles and sir, you will be interested to know his testimonies in the court, month after month, is a classic and epic by itself.

Mahatma Gandhi fought against a mighty imperial power, and brought independence for our mighty nation. He lived to see India win independence. Mar Dionysius did not remain to enjoy the fruits of his great sufferings which we enjoy at present.

The presence of Upa Rashtrapathi in our midst this evening is a fitting recognition of the greatness of his soul and his far sightedness.

Sir, you have adorned with distinction and grace the office of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India. You had the distinction of becoming the youngest pleader in the country in 1942, the youngest advocate general in 1943 and the youngest Chief Justice of Nagpur High Court in 1958.

You Sir, are the only person who had acted as President, Vice-President and the Chief Justice of Courts thus holding the three top positions of our country at the same time.

Your election as Vice-President of India is also unique as all parties unanimously elected you. As officiating president of India you have won for us great laurels from different nations of the world.

You are a good teacher, one of the most respected jurists of the country and one of the most successful presiding officers of Rajya Sabha. You seldom sit after the question hour and I am sure that Minister Rahim will testify that this one hour is made lively by your witticisms, quotations from Urdu, Persian and French classics; your sense of humour has defied tensions on many critical occasions.

It will be unfair for me if I don't make mention of your most secular outlook. I consider this great event as Sangam of three great culture. You Sir, are a great Muslim married to a great Hindu lady and to-day you bless by your presence a X'an Community with a tradition of 2000 years in India.

Sir, on behalf of this ancient and independent church we express our deepest sense of gratitude to you in your having condescended to be with us. Our heartfelt thanks are due to our Chief Minister Karunakaran who is guiding the destiny of the State in a most difficult time. Our special thanks are due to him and we wish him well.

Minister Rahim, in a short time, has distinguished himself as a good minister and our sincere thanks are due to him.

Our church is thankful to Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan and the ministers. Today the members of our church from Delhi to Cape Comorin have gathered here which show our solidarity and faith in the leadership of our great leader, H. H. the Catholicos. We pray God Almighty to guide us in future also.

Heroic Virtues and

Vattasseril Thirumeni

C. K. Kochukoshy I. A. S. (Rtd.)

Whenever the memory of the late Mar Dionysius flashes through my mind, the first idea that strikes me is the concept of heroic virtues associated with some of the Christian saints of the hoary past. We normally imagine that a saint of any religion is one secluded from the hurry-scurry of mundane life, sequestered in a hermitage, praying and meditating and blessing people who flock to get his darshan. A different type of a saint may be a theological Pundit with knowledge as his forte, all the time studying and interpreting the scriptures, making profound statements on the faith, morals and discipline of his religion and consciously leading a puritanical life. We may also visualize a still different holy man, a live-wire organizer who always runs to the succour of the oppressed, who extends a helping hand to all those who need it. He exudes the image of a good Samaritan doing some social good every day as a philosophy of his life. Holy in their own way, what distinguished some of them from the early saints of christendom however, was the predominance of heroism in the virtues the latter which gave a new glittering dimension to their sacrifices, personality and image. These heroic virtues arise from an extraordinarily deep commitment to the causes they espouse and an unflinching faith in God which make them bold to suffer any privation for His sake. To present day tacticians, it might appear that such heroism had not been quite warranted and their causes could have been served more economically with much less sacrifice. Take for example the case of St. Peter. He told his captors to crucify him with his head down, a much less convenient posture for execution than the normal one if only he had just kept quiet, he would have been crucified in the normal way as his Lord. But Peter heroically asked for a more cruel form of death inviting more trouble for himself. Heroic virtue therefore, is not merely facing challenges with courage and conviction, but doing so with a bang and without any regard for consequences. There is no scope for any doubt about the depth of commitment involved. The ideas of maximum returns with minimum necessary expenses which guide modern business administration do not exist in the realm of heroic virtues.

Perhaps with a tinge of filial affection, I believe that if Mar Dionysius had been born in some earlier centuries in a different geographical context, his name would have already adorned the list of saints who are believed to be constantly interceding before God on behalf of sinful mortals like us. Even so, the really great

souls of the past have left behind them vivid shadows of their lives which have an invincible tendency to appear longer and longer as decades and centuries pass by, very much like the steadily elongating shadows created by the afternoon sun. It is under the influence of this elongating shadow that we are forced to think of Mar Dionysius every year and to assign to him the sobriquet "SUN OF THE MALANKARA CHURCH". It is he who persuaded the Patriarch of Antioch to transplant the old Catholicate from Tigris to Kerala. This was no doubt an overdue recognition of the autocephaly of the Indian Church as in the case of any other Orthodox Church. All these churches have national bases and are autocephalous. In any case, this would have become inevitable when India became free in 1947, despite the desire of a small section of our brethren to preserve the anachronistic umbilical cord with Antioch.

One of the most distinguished historians of the current century, Z. M. Paret, has graphically described the trials and tribulations of Mar Dionysius, in his efforts to uphold the dignity of the Malankara Church. The image of Mar Dionysius which emerges from the pages of Paret's history is that of an extraordinary Knight of the Garter in the realm of church and endowed with an intellect far superior to any of the Knights: A native Bishop, resisting all pressures to wrest agreements surrendering their temporal rights to foreign authority, naturally exasperated the Patriarch who had believed that such agreements were necessary after the Royal Court decision ruling out any such powers for him in Malankara. The intense desire of the Patriarch to secure temporal powers and the equally intense opposition to it spearheaded by Mar Dionysius collided, resulting in the excommunication of the latter. For half a century, the atmosphere in Malankara was surcharged with emotion. All patriotic elements lined up behind Mar Dionysius giving him solid support. The late O. M. Cheriyan offered the first prototype of present day gherao against the Patriarch and thwarted for the time being, all designs against the Malankara Metropolitan. But events were moving fast and Mar Dionysius was finally excommunicated, alienating from Antioch, the sympathies of a large section of the church. This eventually led to the traumatic split in the church.

A permanent solution to the problem of foreign domination was to obviate the very necessity of depending upon Antioch for all ecclesiastical purposes, once and for all. It may be recalled that this dependence had started only in the seventeenth century for the consecration of our bishops fully in conformity with canonical law for which benediction of an episcopal authority was deemed essential. H. H. Abdul Messiah the senior Patriarch of Antioch was kind enough to accede to the request of Mar Dionysius and bestowed on us the heritage of the old Catholicate of the East at Tigris which had become defunct a few decades

ago. This background will help us in understanding the intensity of the agony suffered by Mar Dionysius before and after his excommunication. When he was told that his excommunication was in the offing, he is reported to have quipped that he would accept it as if it were a gold necklace. He was right in this metaphor because the subsequent invalidation of the excommunication by the judiciary and also by the establishment of the Catholicate in Malankara shows that it was nothing but a blessing in disguise. Even some of our own people who had reservation about the Catholicate at the time are today rallying round the very same institution with a reduced weight and lustre compromising with canonical law. It was the sheer boldness intellectual honesty and other heroic virtues of Mar Dionysius which have secured for our Church the stature of an independent entity and ensured its phenomenal growth in the twentieth century. If Mar Dionysius had succumbed to the temptations and signed the agreement aforesaid, even today we would have been under the tutelage of a foreign hierarchy, creating more problems and suffocating our initiative and self respect.

Mar Dionysius was an intellectual giant with a penetrating theological mind. He was a Jnana Yogi. His brief and juicy dissertations on the fundamentals of Orthodox faith are very famous. He challenged the validity of his excommunication on grounds of natural justice and canonical law. His detractors grilled him in court, trotting out uncanny aspects of biblical legends to confound him. As a Bishop he could not afford to question the sanctity of any of the allusions nor their relevance. On the question of natural justice, they asked him whether God Almighty had obtained the explanation of Adam and Eve before they were expelled from the garden of Eden. A lesser genius would have floundered miserably. His opponents were trying to prove that the Patriarch was right in excommunicating him arbitrarily. When many eyes and ears were glued on to him inquisitively, he astonished the Court and the advocates by saying that while Adam had confessed his guilt, he was totally denying it. He also added that according to canon law, only the Holy Synod had the right to punish him and not the Patriarch all by himself. They asked him whether there was any session of a Synod before expelling Adam from Eden. He cut short the glee of the questioner by pointing out that the authority involved in the case of Adam was God himself and in any case the decision to expel Adam was taken by God in His Trinity consisting of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, a virtual synod of three members in unanimity. Those who questioned him must have given him up unable to get anything out of him. His examination, cross examination etc took a very long time, running to weeks. But Mar Dionysius was never rattled. If any question was repeated to him, he reminded the advocate the exact

earlier date on which he had answered the same and the accuracy of his memory was always found to be phenomenal.

The spiritual and saintly aspect of his personality has been almost entirely obscured by his heroic and intellectual image. The superhuman halo of his Karma Yoga is noted by all his admirers though a few of them also know the strength of his Bhakti Yoga. He had an unflinching faith in God which he did not like to exhibit. But he was a saint par excellence. The Malankara Church has yet to consider more seriously the question of his canonization. I have experienced his blessings on a few occasions which were definitely miraculous by any standards. My recently published book INTO AN HOUR GLASS contains references to these mystic experiences. The book itself is dedicated to his sanctified memory. During the tumultuous days of the summary case regarding the possession of the Old Seminary in 1911, an enemy agent set upon to do away with his life, one night climbed up a ladder stealthily placed behind his room in the upper story of the Seminary building. The mercenary fell down twice from the ladder on seeing the Metropolitan deeply engrossed in his midnight prayers and kneeling before God, unaware of the diabolic designs against him in operation. The murder mission having thus failed, Mar Dionysius continued to be in possession of the Old Seminary. Fear was not his weakness. Once, when he saw one of his priests being rough-handled by a muscle man trespassing into the seminary compound, he was so annoyed that he reacted like Christ in the temple of Jerusalem. He promptly administered, with the help of his walking stick, an argumentum ad baculum, to one of the priests of the opposite party who was stage managing the whole ugly operation. Attention of everybody was distracted from the business of trespass and the situation was saved for him. The coldblooded murder of one of his body guards in the very vicinity of the Old Seminary could not unnerve him, neither could a loaded pistol held point blank to his chest. He was made of much sterner stuff. The question naturally arises as to what was the motivation that sustained him from succumbing to such severe onslaughts? On the spiritual side he was excommunicated, on the physical side he was under constant threat of liquidation and on the social side at least a section of his own church was ranged against him. Why did he brave all this and fight to the bitter end? No personal gain could have compensated an ascetic like him. These were his infinite faith in the destiny of his Church, in divino justice and the convictions imbibed from his predecessors like the Saint of Parumala and Mar Joseph Dionysius of Pulikkotil. He was determined to see that the poor, simple and ancient church established by St. Thomas was not allowed to wither away. He was inspired by the purity and righteousness of his faith and believed that it ought to be nurtured and allowed to flower in its own oriental environment in this country itself. He believed that

this was his mission and he should protect his Church both from its internal and external detractors alike. Once convinced of this mission, he was willing to pay any price for its consummation and undergo any suffering for its sake. His heroic virtues arise from this situation. He suffered for this Church and the poignancy of his suffering, like that of Christ was that atleast some people for whom he bore the cross not only disowned him but even belighted in mortifying him.

His scholarship of the Syriac language and theology, his ability to understand and interpret the law of the land, his impregnable logic and incisive intellect and above all his devotion to God and his saintly life have made him a unique soul, still hovering over Malankara and his people, always ready to help them. More and more people are seeking his intercession and witnessing to its efficacy. I have experienced that often his intercessions are decisive and immediate and hence highly dependable, provided it is invoked with faith. He is already a saint for a large number of people like me and our number is bound to swell as Time lengthens the shadow of his memory. If and when he is declared as a Saint, the like of him even in the saintly fraternity will be rare. The Hindu Scripture Bhagavad Gita, mentions three Yogas for self-perfection which is the goal of life according to its philosophy. These are Karma, Bhakti and Jnana ie action, devotion and cognition. Realization of God, they say is possible through any of the three paths indicated by these yogas. The soul is endowed with two wings, viz, Bhakti and Jnana with Karma Yoga to serve as the tail to maintain balance. This analogy of a bird projects the relationship between the three Yogas and the Soul. Despite his great devotion to God, it would not be proper to describe Mar Dionysius exclusively as a Bhakti Yogi. He himself had taken care not to exhibit his devotion to God, in any conspicuous way. Though a great scholar in Theology, he did not claim superiority over others on the basis of his erudition. Though a man of action willing to strike or help people as the occasion demanded it, he never pre-empted to be a Karma Yogi. But if we study the annals of religious history, there will be few men who have combined in themselves so admirably the virtues of devotion, cognition and action as the late Mar Dionysius. Such a combination of heroic virtues is symbolised by the lofty bird to which the Bhagavad Gita commentators have alluded. Malankara Church should move now to honour the soul that had made the church what it is today.

The Ministry of the Church- Two ways of Understanding It

(Paulos Mar Gregorios)

One thing has become clear in the course of ecumenical discussion. What now divides Christians is not a difference in description of the Holy Trinity or of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Doctrinal disagreement centres largely around the nature of the church, the sacramental mysteries of the church and the ministry of the church.

These differences have their source primarily in *our understanding of and attitude to reality as a whole*. In our time, we who are the product of an educational system shaped by western civilisation, are very much the victims of the Enlightenment. We have learned a particular way of reasoning, based on logical demonstrability and functional usefulness as the most important criteria for argument. The Christian theology shaped by that rationality, partakes of all the defects of that way of looking at things.

This way leads to a cleavage in our understanding and thinking. Some of us like to think in terms which can be clearly rational, and seek only that which is functionally efficient and useful. This is a way of thinking inherited from western civilisation through the educational system, and it has important consequences for our culture as for our faith.

The clearest evidence of this victimisation by western civilisation occurs in the area of art. Our perceptions about reality are more deeply expressed in art, music, sculpture and architecture than in our rational discourse. We have today become poor in art and architecture, in music and painting, primarily because, following western civilization, we have put more emphasis on logical discourse and functional utility, and abandoned our own artistic creativity for the sake of a very superficial rationality.

This affects our perceptions of God, of the Incarnation, of the Church, and of its ministry and sacraments. We have today a functional understanding of the Church and of its sacraments primarily in terms of their usefulness understood in rational terms. Our document on the Ministry, which we are discussing today (BEM, Faith & Order Paper III) suffers from the same defect, though it strives hard to state in logical terms some of the classical perceptions about the *nature* of the Church and her sacramental ministry and mysteries.

The document speaks about the "authority and responsibility" (9) of ministers, but it does also speak of the ministers' *presence* which "reminds the community of the divine initiative etc" (12).^{*} A proper treatment of the ministry and the sacramental mysteries should deal with both these aspects—(a) meaning and (b) function. But (a) should not be in terms of (b) alone.

The document does speak about (a), but since this is not an area where we have a complete consensus, the document is hesitant and ambivalent. The two key paragraphs which describe the meaning and function of the ordained ministry, (13 and 14), are brief and worth citing here in full:

13. The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry.
14. It is especially in the eucharistic celebration that the ordained ministry is the visible focus of the deep and all-embracing communion between Christ and the members of his body. In the celebration of the Eucharist, Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the Church. It is Christ who invites to the meal and who presides at it. In most churches this presidency is *signified* and *represented* by an ordained minister" (emphasis added)

The two under-lined words are of crucial significance, for the churches which follow the ancient tradition. The signifying and representative character of the ordained minister is the major disagreement among our churches.

The differences relate to the questions:

- (a) What is represented?
- (b) How is it represented?
- (c) Under what conditions is it represented?

(a) *What is represented?*

According to the document it is "the presidency" that is signified. Those who adhere to the ancient tradition would say that the "presence of Christ" is signified, not merely as "president", but also as High Priest, as Prophet, as Messiah, King and Pastor. We would also say that this presence is signified not only at the Eucharist, but throughout the life of the Church and of the ordained

^{*} This idea of the Minister as a "Reminder" is expressed, from a very limited point of view, in H. J. M. Nouwen, *The Living Reminder*, New York, Seabosy, 1977.

minister within it. But for those churches which do not recognize the Eucharist as participation in Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, the concept of Christ as High Priest, and his sacramental presence in the Eucharist, may not make much sense. In the document's discussion of the Eucharist, the sacrificial character of the Eucharist is recognized, but in terms like the 'great sacrifice of praise' (Eucharist 4), reducing the sacrifice to praise alone. When sacrificial words like 'offer' are used, they refer mainly to praise and prayer, but not to sacrifice as such.

For the ancient tradition, the person of the bishop in the church and in its eucharistic sacrifice signifies more than 'presidency', he signifies *sacramentally* the eternal High Priest, Christ Himself, offering his own life (body and blood) to God the Father. The commentary 1: (8) on the Eucharist document refers to the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist as "propitiatory sacrifice" and calls on the churches to "review the old controversies about 'sacrifice' and deepen their understanding of the reasons why other traditions than their own have either used or rejected this term." The document on the Eucharist then goes on to recognize the sacrificial character of the Eucharist in para 10: "In Christ we offer ourselves as a living and holy sacrifice in our daily lives, "but it cannot say that we do so primarily in the Eucharist and only derivatively in our daily lives.

This hesitancy in the Eucharist document carries over into the Ministry document. The concepts of sacramental presence and sacrifice are smuggled in, so to speak, in the Eucharist document (see e.g. Eucharist 6), and when it comes to the Ministry document, they almost fade out. As usual the central idea, not acceptable to the "enlightened", of sacrifice, is relegated in the ministry document also, to the commentary. In 2: (17), the commentary says,

"the priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of the baptized have in their respective ways the *function* (emphasis added) of sacrifice and intercession. As Christ has offered himself, Christians offer their whole being as 'living sacrifice'."

This is good as far as it goes, except for that lousy word 'function' which has crept in. But it is only in the commentary and not in the main body of the Ministry document which of course means that we have no consensus among the churches on this point.

We return to the question: What is signified in the presence of the ordained minister in the Eucharist and in the life of the Body of Christ? The document says "this presidency is signified and represented by an ordained Minister is a sacramental presence of Christ the High Priest, the Perfect Prophet and the Messianic shepherd-King (pastor) in the life of the Church".

What does 'sacramental presence' mean? To that we now turn.

(b) *How is it represented?*

The mode of Christ's presence in his body has to be understood in sacramental terms, and that is why ordination is a sacramental mystery in the ancient tradition.

But the terms 'sacramental mystery' and 'sacramental presence' are themselves subject to mis-understanding and misuse. 'Sacramental mystery' is a concocted term, half Latin, half Greek. In Hebrew Aramaic or Greek, there is no word for sacrament. Sacrament is therefore not a biblical word. In Latin it was a legal term for a pledge, a security deposit of money, a forfeit deposited in court as guarantee of bonafides. It also came to mean a military recruits pledge and oath, an oath of allegiance.

The Western Church began using this word to mean signs of Christ's pledge and promise—in the Eucharist, in the Baptism and in other symbolic actions of the Church. It was adopted as equivalent of the semitic term *raze' d' idtha* (*roze d' idtho* if you want the West Syrian pronunciation), which in Greek in *tamyskria tes ekklesias*, in Malayalam (*sabhayute' mauthikarahasyangal*). But it was assimilated in the western concept to the idea of a pledge or guarantee of a promise, which is the sense in which Luther takes it.

In the ancient tradition, a *mysterian* is a *community participation in the hidden counsels of God*, an initiation into the will of God as known in the community; but this is more than just a cognitive unsealing of a hidden secret. It is a transforming experience in which one is assimilated into the Kingdom of God as present on earth, into that company of the holy ones on earth and in the heavens (i. e. beyond the horizon of our senses).

When we then re-adopt the Latin term *sacramentum* in a phrase like the "sacramental mysteries of the Church", we mean something that makes real the community's transforming participation in the heavenly reality of the Kingdom through earthly experiences like Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Ordination, absolution, marriage and the anointing of the sick.

It is in relation to a concept like 'sacramental mysteries of the Church' that we use the other term, the "Sacramental Presence of Christ the High Priest and Good Shepherd in the Church". The episcopal college in the local church, i. e. the bishop with the presbyters and deacons, constitutes a sacramental presence of Christ the High Priest and Good shepherd in his Church. All members of the body of Christ participate in this priestly and pastoral

ministry of Christ; but the ordained episcopal college represents Christ with his apostles and disciples in a special way, a visible, consecrated presence within the Church, through persons specially set apart by special laying on of hands and invocation of the Holy spirit.

It is this mode of presence that constitutes the specificity of the ordained clergy—not just their function, authority and responsibility, but their presence itself. It was a distortion of the real disagreement when the ecumenical movement, began focussing an 'Apostolic Succession' as the central issue. The real debate is about the "ordained episcopal college as sacramental presence of Christ the High Priest and Good Shepherd in His Church".

This mode always transcends the rational, moves into the realm beyond our senses, where our rational conceptual framework must fall to pieces if not transcended. This is a fundamental philosophical question—the mode of Christ's presence experienced in trans-rational categories. The BEM document as a whole is plagued by the conflict between its genuine desire to be loyal to the authentic tradition of the Church on the one hand, and the attempt to explain that heritage in the rational-functional categories of the post-Enlightenment western civilisation.

Until the concept of "sacramental mysteries of the Church" is clarified and in relation to that the other term "sacramental presence of Christ" is interpreted, any attempt to explain the ministry in purely rational-functional and missiological terms would be seen by the authentic tradition as woefully inadequate.

Under what conditions?

The conditions under which this sacramental presence can be authentic need to be discussed.

(1) First of all a Sacramental Presence, separated from Him of whom it is the presence, loses its authenticity. It is only in sacramental union with Christ that the sacramental presence lives. In this way it is different from sign or symbol.

(2) Second, the Sacramental Presence is not a gift of the spirit for the individual bishop, presbyter or deacon, but something given for the Church, for its '*oikodome*' or upbuilding. Hence the Sacramental Presence becomes inauthentic when its integral relation to the whole community is broken. It is only in communion with the priesthood of the whole Church and on its foundation that the Sacramental Presence lives. In the Eastern tradition, the anointing of a bishop takes place at the time of his baptism, when he enters into participation in the Priest-Shepherd ministry of Christ. There is no reanointing at the time of ordination. The priesthood of the

whole church, in which all baptized-chrismated men, women and children participate, is the foundation and milieu for the sacramental presence of Christ.

(3) Third, the sacramental presence of Christ in the Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon, cannot be exhaustively explained in terms of their functions alone. Their very person, body and mind, soul and spirit, is consecrated to be that presence. There is thus no "retirement" possible. One continues to be that presence so long as one lives. The person of the Bishop, Priest and Deacon is consecrated; not just their function. This is a major point of disagreement between the older traditions and the new rational-functional approach of much modern theology.

The Ministry of women

The other major element of disagreement relates to the ministry of women in the Church. There is agreement on the following points:

- (a) In Christ there is neither male nor female; all are alike members of the Body of Christ and participate in the Priestly-Pastoral ministry of Christ as full members of the Body of Christ. This applies also to all baptized and chrismated children.
- (b) There is nothing in the tradition of the Church, despite the instruction of St. Paul to the Corinthians, that forbids the teaching ministry to women. The tradition does not say that women are not allowed to proclaim the Kingdom or to exercise the ministry of pastorally upbuilding each other.
- (c) In the long history of the Church, till very recent times, no women has been consecrated as a bishop. We do not know of many women who were presbyter (a) s in local parishes. We know about deaconesses in the Bible as well as in later times.
- (d) When Christ appointed the Twelve, they were all males-possibly because they represented the Patriarchs of Twelve Tribes of the New Israel.
- (e) We know about several Apostles who were not of the Twelve-St. Paul, for example, as well as Andronicus and Junias (Rom 16:7) and perhaps James. But we do not know of a woman Apostle, though there must have been several women among those who were eye witnesses to the Resurrection of Christ-including Mary Magdalene (the first witness) and Joanna and Mary (Luke 24:9). We had

women prophets (Lk.2:36, Rev. 2:20) but no women Apostles of whom we know.

- (f) We know that the arrangement made by the Apostles in all the churches which they established was to set up a group of make elders with a presiding make episkopos. This apostolic pattern has continued for nearly 2000 years without being questioned. For these traditions that put some weight on tradition, this is heavy weight indeed.

Our BEM document seems to take the attitude: "the less said the better" on this issue. The second part of para 18 is very cursory treatment of the question indeed. The commentary on para 18 makes some cryptic allusions to the "nature of humanity and Christology" which are far from clear. The document would have been much more useful if the case had been more adequately presented on both sides.

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Forms of the Ordained Ministry

As for the forms of the Ordained Ministry, the document nostalgically regrets that "there is no single New Testament Pattern", as if the function of the New Testament were to set down patterns for the ordering of the Church. The Apostles set down certain patterns for the Ministry, and the Church has, throughout the centuries made many changes and adaptations without (except in some cases) abandoning the basic three-fold pattern. The document recommends the three-fold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon as "an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it" (22), though the pattern "stands evidently in need of reform".

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There are many other areas like Apostolic succession and Ordination as Sacrament, where the document heroically tries to satisfy the Reformed and at the same time to be faithful to the authentic tradition. The success in this regard is commendable, but certainly not total.

There is no dealing with the thorny problem that theologically understood, no person can offer himself or herself as a candidate for the ministry. It is the Spirit and the Community of faith that chooses and calls. In our systems this aspect has become largely nominal.

For one who has laboured long with previous drafts of the Ministry document, this last version marks enormous improvement. As a discussion starter, this is a good document, except for its defects pointed out in the first part of this paper.

News and Notes

The Church in Poland Today

Whereas freedom to belong to a religious community and practice one's faith is guaranteed legislatively by virtually all socialist countries, the 'space' which is given in actual practice to different forms of religious practice varies considerably. Poland is probably the country with most latitude in this respect. And in spite of the economic and political turmoil of the past few years one can even note an increase in the diversity and intensity of religious activity.

The traditionally very strong position of the Roman Catholic Church has been a factor which the state could not neglect, and in spite of the often difficult position for the much smaller Orthodox, Old Catholic and Protestant churches, they too have benefited from the forceful presence of the Roman Catholic Church in the Polish society.

To illustrate the freedom given to church activities in the past few years the following can be mentioned as examples:

- permissions to build new churches and church-related buildings have been given very readily.

- the import, printing and sale of Bibles and other Christian literature has been very liberal and increased tremendously. Some months ago the first non-Catholic Christian bookshop was opened by the Lutheran Church in Cieszyn.

- Since 1982 PEC member churches have been offered time on state radio and television for regular transmissions of religious programmes.

- the churches were recognized, also throughout the period of martial law with no restrictions, as channels of providing material aid to the Polish population.

- public evangelization campaigns are regularly carried out by the churches with increased attendance.

- children's and youth camps are arranged by all PEC churches each summer.

- the Lutheran Church has been permitted to establish an Association for intellectuals.

- during martial law pastors had special permission and petrol allowances to visit people in their parishes, etc.

It is understandable that their minority situation makes contacts abroad of vital importance for the PEC member churches. This provides a feeling of belonging to a wider fellowship which is much needed not least now that the Catholics have their 'own'

pope. Bilateral as well as multilateral (WCC, etc.) relationships have been intensified over the last few years, partly—but certainly not only—due to the vast programme of material aid.

(Courtesy—EPS)

Sermon prompts Danish church-state Brouhaha

A church-state brouhaha has developed in Denmark in the wake of a nationally-televised Christmas Eve sermon which some considered too political.

In the sermon, Lutheran Pastor Birte Andersen compared the US-led "peace" in Western Europe to the Pax Romana, the rule of the Roman Empire over much of the world at the time of Jesus' birth. She said the contemporary European situation is "based on hidden control, moral corruption, and hidden violence."

In the wake of complaints, government religious affairs minister Elsebeth Kock-Petersen asked Andersen's bishop, Ole Bertelsen, for a report and evaluation in preparation for possible action against the pastor. Like all clergy of the numerically-dominant Lutheran "folk church", Andersen is a civil servant paid by the state.

Bertelsen declined Kock-Petersen's request: "I do not accept the claim of the minister that she has the competence to decide on whether the limits of the freedom of proclamation have been violated in this and other cases. The ministry of religious affairs has no right to exercise spiritual supervision over the proclamation of the pastors", he said.

The Copenhagen bishop added that "all attempts to limit the freedom of proclamation of the church disclose that this society has a distorted understanding of what freedom, humaneness, and what the nature of the state is". In a radio interview, he underlined that the Danish constitution does not require the church to support the state, only that the state help fund the church. Faced with Bertelsen's refusal, support on that principle from the other 10 Lutheran bishops, and rising political pressure, the government minister withdrew her request. That is understood to mean that no government action will be taken on the issue.

Quakers on Grenada

A delegation which visited Grenada under auspices of the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker-related agency, has condemned last October's US-led invasion of the Caribbean island. The delegation says there were "non-violent alternatives to the precipitate use of military force, which would have avoided the disruption and polarisation now evident throughout the region."

One delegation member said that while Grenadians at first welcomed the invasion, they "would have welcomed the devil" in the wake of the murder of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and the martial-law period which followed. Now, islanders are "cynical and depressed."

Catholic/Orthodox meeting

The heads of the world's Eastern (Constantinople) Orthodox churches have been invited to participate in an ecumenical meeting with Pope John Paul and other Vatican representatives in Bari in southeast Italy 26 February. Bari was the site of a 1089 meeting which attempted to reconcile Eastern (Constantinople) Orthodoxy and Catholicism, which formally split in 1054.

Tributes to Two Ecumenical Giants by W. C. C.

On behalf of the World Council of Churches and on my own behalf I want to express our deepest condolences to [son] Stephen and the family on the passing from life to life of our beloved Robert Mackie. Generations of students and of church leaders and people have owed a great debt to Robert for his sturdy faith, his lively wit and wisdom, and his constant caring for all he met around the world and especially for those in need. My relationship with him goes back to nearly 57 years when at a post-war student conference and the beginning of the cold war he reminded us of the words of Lamentations: "It is by thy mercy that we are not consumed".

Those words have left a deep mark on me as I have tried to continue his work in the ecumenical movement and the World Council during these troubled times. In its early years Robert contributed significantly in creating the fellowship which is at the heart of the life of World Council of Churches and he particularly helped the churches to understand what it meant to be of aid to each other sharing the mercy of God as they rely on it and are renewed by it.

We thank God for all that Robert has been to and done for the churches and people the world over and we pray that we will be found faithful to share with him in the communion of the saints in our allegiance to our crucified and risen Lord.

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On behalf of the World Council of Churches, of our honorary president Dr. Visser 't Hooft and on my own behalf I send our profound condolences to the family and friends of our dear brother in Christ, John Coventry Smith, who has passed from life to life in the communion of the saints. John characteristically ended his

ministry on Sunday by speaking of the church as the community of believers all over the world as he told the story of his participation in the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches. This was a fitting climax of his life and witness together with his being present [last June] for the union of the two great [US] Presbyterian churches for which he worked for so long.

John understood the Gospel as being addressed to all people and to every aspect of life and he saw the church to be missionary through and through. His missionary experience in Japan, his years of service to his church through COEMAR [Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations], his role in facilitating the integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches, and his leadership in the World Council as counsellor and president all demonstrated the ecumenical and world-wide spirit which was so natural to him.

We all owe a great debt to John for his steady, gentle and generous faith in Christ, his wise statesmanship, his openness to others and eagerness to enable others to witness and serve, his gracious, brotherly way with all of us, and his unchangeable confidence in the purpose of God to unite all peoples and all things in Christ. We thank God for John Coventry Smith and dedicate ourselves to be servants of the Church as a world community being a sign of the world community to come under the sovereignty of our gracious God.

Communist Party Policy and Religion

The following statement was offered 14 December during the two-week visit of the British Council of Churches delegation to China. Graeme C. Jackson of the British Methodist Overseas Division, a member of the BCC delegation, notes that the statement "was made at the initiation of Madame Chou Enlai", and that Canterbury Archbishop Robert Runcie, BCC president and delegation leader, "had asked no questions relating to this matter" in connection with their meeting.

At the founding of the People's Republic of China the first Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference brought all parties, non-party and other organizations together in a common programme. One of the stipulations agreed upon was that citizens of China have freedom of religious belief. No matter what form church activities take, provided they carry on the normal church activities and are in conformity with the true principles (or essentials) of the faith, these churches are protected by law. Since Chinese citizens have this freedom and right to religious belief, we do not force anyone to believe or not to believe in religion.

It is not permitted to make use of religion to do anything detrimental to the interests of the people or of the State or to disrupt the construction of the country.

Each person must decide for himself to believe or not to believe in religion of his own accord.

There is no regulation in the constitution about age for belief. This right has not been changed since the beginning of the People's Republic of China. It was written into the first constitution in the first National People's Congress. Last year we convened our fifth National People's Congress which revised the constitution. In this revision has been included the 36th Article which explicitly states the freedom of the individual to religious belief.

There was indeed a time when civil turmoil in the country resulted in the policy being not carried out properly, and in some cases even actions against the policy took place. These breaches of the regulations and mistakes are being corrected so people may now carry out religious activities of their own accord.

In the constitution it is clearly stipulated that there should be no discrimination against those who believe in a religion or those who don't believe in any religion. No matter what religion one believes in, all who have religious beliefs are enjoying all of their rights to citizenship and may take their part in the social and economic structures of the country in all its aspects including the building up of the nation.

In the organization in which I work, the PPCC, there are people's organizations including religious organizations. Therefore when your grace and others are forming a religious delegation to visit China we welcome you warmly.

Your visit to China will lead to understanding and increased friendship between the people of China and the people of Britain, and especially between the Chinese people and British Christians. The visit will also contribute to the increase of friendship and understanding between the Chinese people and Christians all over the world. So please use your organization to tell them of our policy.

(Courtesy—EPS)

The Pope's Visit to the Lutheran Church in Rome

There was plenty of newspaper comment on the pope's visit to the Lutheran Church in Rome. The other Roman Protestant churches, although invited, did not take part. The (Protestant) Federation explained that they understood the Lutheran intentions in receiving the pope, but they did not consider that the service of the 11th of December had helped the ecumenical dialogue. It gave the

impression that unity had already been substantially arrived at, that differences had virtually ceased to exist.

This stand of ours certainly does not mean that we are not ready for meetings for prayer and study with Catholics. They have been going on for years. Following the pope's visit, the decision not to take part has seemed to have been a wise one (though unpleasing to our Lutheran brothers) because it was at least clear, amongst all the ecumenical muddles.

There is a way of conceiving the Church which is too far away from our conception of it. Symbolic gestures too easily slip out of the hands of those who thought them up. In this case, police, barriers, scrutiny of those going into the church, all became theological facts in need of careful thought. Is it possible to meet the pope as a brother? He represents a church which claims power. Would we secretly be bowing down and envying that status?

The figure of the pope with its suggestions of being the servant of all the churches, is really at the heart of the ecumenical problem. We cannot give the impression of something different. In this case the local character of the meeting was carefully respected, the Roman Lutherans made it quite plain that they were in no danger of recognizing papal authority. They mentioned the tricky points in the unity debate....

The Kissinger Commission Report

... During my hour-and-a-half testimony [before the Kissinger Commission on Central America] most of the commissioners repeatedly indicated they believed today's Nicaragua to be as bad as or worse than Nicaragua under Somoza; Mr. Kissinger made it clear that he believes Nicaragua is as bad as or worse than Nazi Germany.

Such a blatant misreading leads naturally to the conclusion that massive military force is necessary to destroy any movement that might create a new Nicaragua. In this view no economic aid must shore up Nicaragua, though (US) \$ 8 billion is proposed for other repressive regimes, such as Guatemala's.

There seemed to be one point on which the commission members and I agreed: All nations ought to be judged by the same criteria. But the report fails to do that. If free elections are desirable in Nicaragua, why not in Guatemala? If guerrilla activity in El Salvador is bad, why support it against Nicaragua?

No one would argue that the Nicaraguan government is perfect far from it—but it has provided a great hope to the poor multitudes of Latin America who see in Nicaragua symbol of victory over bloody repression.

Message of the Polish Ecumenical Council

...The situation in which the world lives seems to be a negation of this truth (that Jesus Christ is "our life and the life of the world"). The shadow of holocaust is looming over the globe: malnutrition and hunger of hundreds of millions of inhabitants of the earth, violence and terror in many countries, wars fought in some regions, trampling on human rights, threat to the natural environment, diseases, and, first and foremost, the slipping out of control of armaments and threat of a nuclear war. In those circumstances the motto, "Jesus Christ—the life of the world", assumes a character of a profession which, as history tells us, many a time had to be paid by suffering and even martyrdom.

Also our country is wrestling with the difficulties of a profound crisis. The toil of the entire nation is yet to bring the desired effects which are necessary for all of us. The still difficult living conditions breed discouragement and resignation although we know that it is on our own laboriousness, effectiveness and productivity that the change for an improvement of our living standard depends. That is why our churches point to the evangelical ethos of work, its deep sense and dignity well-grounded in God's order of creation. At the same time they call for persistence, patience and hope indispensable for the construction of a better tomorrow for our Homeland.

We have enough problems to concentrate only on our troubles and shortages. And yet, we are not an isolated island. We live among the community of nations the affluent and the poor whose riches or shortages are by far bigger than our resources and shortages. This global family of nations is facing one common threat. The stepped-up production of modern weapons is by no means conducive to averting the dangerous spectre of holocaust. To the contrary, the more weapons there are, the less security, the weaker the balance of power, the bigger the threat for peace!

Aware of those dangers and the great Christian responsibility in striving to preserve peace we support the stance of the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (last year) on the necessity of preparing international agreements and their ratification which would condemn both the possession and the use of nuclear weapons against humanity.

The common threat is attached by a far more perfect solidarity and unity in the service of peace. The churches are praying for peace, inspire anti-armament and anti-militaristic actions and support cooperation with other religions and with non-believers who are united by the common wish to preserve the sacred gift of life. Also we have our place among the multitude of people who are united in the service of peace.

Solidarizing with those who oppose the temptation of military confrontation and the arms race, we treat our participation in the service for peace as a testimony of our will, as a *status confessionis* and emulation of Jesus Christ. True to this motivation of our actions we support the earliest possible end to the escalation of fear and nuclear terror and resumption of the suspended negotiations in Geneva. As evangelists we share the conviction that only dialogue, cooperation and consistent application of peaceful means may lead... first to the reduction of nuclear forces and later to their total liquidation and saving the world from a holocaust" ...

(Courtesy—EPS)

A Suicide that was Murder

A case that was recorded as a suicide two years ago has now being shown to be a murder.

Two years ago, when Inspector Soman George of Kerala police, died of gunshot wounds on his chest sustained while on duty in his office, it was officially stated that he had taken his own life.

After a post mortem steps were under way to bury the body at night. But the deceased's relatives arrived on the scene and asked for a second post mortem. It was done the next morning and the body was buried with police honours. Though the second doctor had recovered a few more bullets from the body and certified that there were three wounds on the dead officer's chest, the official theory of suicide stood. The department and the government treated the matter as closed.

But the members of the bereaved family refused to accept the official theory. They were convinced that there was foul play behind Inspector George's death. They brought to light an anonymous letter which he had received two days before his end warning him that his days were numbered. The letter was dismissed by the authorities as of no consequence.

George's young widow Alice acted with determination to clear the memory of her husband. With the help of a few fellow Harijans, Hindu as well as Christian, and a human rights lawyer, she staged an year long *dharna* in front of the State secretariat in Trivandrum. When it had gone half way through, a political change took place in the state and Alice's plea fell on sympathetic ears. A senior officer of the Revenue Board reported that evidence collected by him had shown that George had died of three shots fired at his chest from a minimum distance of two metres.

On the basis of that report, the government asked the Central Bureau of Investigation to probe the matter more fully, unaided by the local police. On the anniversary of the *dharna*, Alice was offered a post in public service by the government on compassionate grounds; and the CBI arrested seven constables who had worked under him at the time of his death.

At this stage newspapers probed the matter and came out with stories connected with what they described as the circumstances leading to George's murder by his own constables. It appeared that all the constables claimed upper class origin, and it was *infra dig* for them to work under a *pulaya* (Harijan) and *puthu Christiani* (new Christian). Besides, George was a stickler for discipline in service and rectitude of conduct. He would not tolerate bribery and corruption. On one occasion he ordered a constable to return Rs. 50 to a lorry driver from whom it had been collected illegally. The same day, the constables are reported to have formed a conspiracy to kill the officer with the service revolver kept in the station.

The CBI investigation into the case has reached an advanced stage.

Moderator of Church of North India elected

Bishop Dinesh Chandra Gorai, CNI Bishop of Calcutta, was elected Moderator of the Church of North India for the next three years during the CNI synod held in Nagpur.

He succeeds Dr. R. S. Bhandare, Bishop of Nagpur, who will be retiring from his bishopric next year while completing 65 years of age, sixty-five is the compulsory retirement age for bishops in the Church of North India, Church of South India and Methodist Church in India.

Bishop Din Dayal of Allahabad was elected Deputy Moderator in place of Bishop Gorai, now becoming Moderator. The Moderator and Deputy Moderator is elected in the Synod (which includes the representatives from the clergy, laymen and laywomen in addition to all the bishops of CNI) which meets after every three years.

The Church of North India was formed in 1970, uniting the Anglicans, Presbyterians, British Methodists, Baptists and Disciples of Christ. It has more than six lakhs of membership with 23 dioceses in North India. The CNI Synod Secretariat functions in New Delhi and the General Secretary is Rev. Pritam Santram.

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I, Rev. Dr. K. M. George, hereby declare that particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sd/-

REV. DR. K. M. GEORGE

15-3-1984

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